# The Middlebury Campus

VOL. CXXII, No. 4 | MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, OCTOBER 3, 2024 | middleburycampus.com


## MIDDLEBURY FALLS TO 19TH IN U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKING

By HUGO ZHANG
*Contributing Writer*

On Sept. 23, U.S. News & World Report released its 2025–2026 national liberal arts colleges rankings, which dropped Middlebury to 19th place — eight positions lower than last year, tied with Grinnell College and Washington and Lee University. This ranking is Middlebury's lowest since its first appearance on the list in 1988, when the college was ranked 17th.

To evaluate liberal arts colleges, U.S. News considers 13 factors, including graduation rates, financial resources, faculty resources, social mobility, standardized test scores and peer assessment. According to this year's data, Middlebury's faculty resources remain in the top 10 nationally, demonstrating that the college's high academic expectations have not changed. However, Middlebury's financial resources have dropped to 45th, and its social mobility ranking is tied for 120th, which undoubtedly contributed to the significant decline in this year's overall ranking.

Theoretically, changes at a college can take time, so an eight-position drop in one year raised suspicion for some members of the college community. Chief Diversity Officer and Interim Title IX Coordinator Professor Miguel Fernández remarked that this drop is insignificant. In an email to The Campus, Fernández commented on the ineffectuality of the U.S. News ranking.

"Middlebury hasn't changed as much as the criteria that US News uses and modifies on a regular basis. The information they use for their rankings is what has changed more than what has changed at Midd," Fernandez wrote, citing the inclusion of students from the Middlebury Language Schools and Bread Loaf School of English as one reason the college's endowment to student ratio is lower than for just the undergraduate population. "U.S. News compares apples to oranges, making the rankings rather useless."

A spokesperson for the college shared that Middlebury remains a prestigious institution, which may not be accurately captured by the ranking system.

"Middlebury is among the top institutions in the nation, and rankings are just one measure of value," they wrote in an email to The Campus, adding that movement by other colleges in the rankings and tied positions contributed to the decline. "Ties are common in the rankings and can create the perception of big drops from year to year when, in reality, the shifts are fairly subtle."

The spokesperson also indicated that pandemic-related issues influenced the college's

*Continued on Page 4*

## UNDERPAID AND UNDERSTAFFED: WHY MIDDLEBURY IS LOSING ITS LIBRARIANS

DAVID ZHAO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
*Davis Family Library, which has seen numerous librarians and staff members depart in recent years due to poor compensation and increased workloads.*

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
*Managing Editor*

Senior Research and Instruction Librarian Brenda Ellis retired on Wednesday after over 23 and a half years in her position, making her the seventh librarian to depart from the college in the past two years and the third in the past five months.

Her former position, the Film and Media Librarian position and a Catalog Librarian position are all freshly vacant, joining the Science and Data Librarian position that has remained empty since the spring of 2023. Since February 2020, the library has seen 14 full and part-time staff members leave, creating a turnover rate of 44%, according to Dean of the Library Mike Roy.

Ellis cited the skill matrix pay system, demoralization from an increased workload and the departure of her colleagues, a lack of career ladder and promotional opportunities, and other factors on which she declined to comment as reasons for her early retirement. Other librarians raised similar concerns, sharing that some of their former colleagues pursued work at other institutions or left librarianship completely for the same reasons.

The skill-based compensation system known as the "skill matrix" system was implemented by the college's Human Resources

*Continued on Page 3*

## *Affordable housing project at Seminary Street hopes to break ground by end of year*

By MACY DAGGITT
*Contributing Writer*

As last week's Clifford Symposium highlighted, affordable housing is one of the most prominent issues facing Vermont today. The town of Middlebury and the college entered into a partnership in 2022 to construct Stonecrop Meadows, an affordable housing development. Construction is expected to commence before the end of the year on a project that may take five to 10 years to be fully completed.

The project involves the construction of 218 units of mixed-use housing, consisting of multi-family homes such as duplexes and townhomes, and will also include a three-story apartment complex. The housing units will be located at 77 Seminary Street Extension in Middlebury.

A particularly important aspect of the Stonecrop Meadows development is garnering support from local communities, according to representatives of Summit Properties. Oftentimes, there is vocal opposition and pushback

*Continued on Page 4*

## MIXED FEELINGS ON CLUB SPORTS TIER SYSTEM, FUNDING PERSIST THIS FALL

By HANNAH FREUND
*Contributing Writer*

Participants in club sports have continued to face a mixture of challenges and successes in sustaining and enabling non-varsity athletic activity under the tier system, according to current leaders of their organizations.

In the tier system under which all club sports operate, teams are assigned to tiers one, two or three based on certain team characteristics. Club sports are assigned a tier one or tier two designation if they do not parallel a varsity sport, while tier three teams already have a counterpart varsity sport on campus, according to prior reporting by The Campus.

Women's rugby co-captain Penny Ly '25 shared her perspective on the tier system, stating that her team's tier one designation allows them substantial flexibility in competitions and support staff.

"The tier system so far has benefited us in allowing us the opportunity to compete multiple teams a season, for two seasons a year," Ly wrote. "Our head coach K.O. Onufry has been an integral part of making rugby accessible to all players."

Tier one and tier two teams are allowed to have two competitive seasons each academic year, while tier three teams are granted one competitive season and one recreational season. Additionally, tier one teams require a paid coach because of physical danger inherent to the

COURTESY PHOTO / TOM HAUGEN
*Club soccer has struggled to get field access as a tier three sport, according to its leaders this year.*

activity, while tier two and tier three club sports do not have similar oversight. Tier one teams are the highest priority club sports teams and are allotted the most funding, while the other tiers sit lower on priority list and are thus granted fewer resources.

Men's club soccer frequently attracts over 100 students at its open practices and selections, demonstrating a strong interest in non-varsity soccer options for students. Given their status as a tier three team, however, men's club soccer has faced challenges in scheduling and reserving field spaces, according to Tom Haugen '25, co-president of men's club soccer. This past spring, his organization was told by the Student Activities Office (SAO) that they could not play competitive games, even though they were not asking for additional funding to do so.

President of men's rugby Cole Siefer '25 is also the co-director of the Student Government Association Finance Committee (SGAFC), where he helps allocate funding to club sports. Siefer believes that the tier system, while imperfect, offers important structure and guidance for club sports.

"I think it's helpful to kind of guide organizations and kind of give them a home within club sports that can give them the support they need to succeed," Siefer said.

While tier one teams receive the most resources and competition time, Co-president of the women's crew team Piper Harring '25, shared that even as

*Continued on Page 2*


## NEWS

**Class of 2028 elects first year senators**
By LUCAS BASHAM

▸ PAGE 2

## LOCAL

**Town petition proposes renewed business tax**
By LANGAN GARRETT

**Community members discuss civic engagement, women in politics**
By MANDY BERGHELA

▸ PAGE 4

## OPINIONS

**We need to talk**
By RACH PECK

**Mental health on campus: not our fault, but our problem**
By SAMUEL WEST ROBERTSON

▸ PAGE 6

## ARTS & CULTURE

**Meet George Matthew Jr: "The Bell Guy"**
By NORAH KHAN

**Cocoon storytelling event invites awe and wonder**
By JONATHAN EATON

▸ PAGE 8

## SPORTS

**Football team beats Colby 24-16**
By JACK McGUIRE

**Women's rugby cruises in home opener**
By JOSH HARKINS

▸ PAGE 10

# CLASS OF 2028 ELECTS FIRST YEAR SENATORS

By LUCAS BASHAM
*Contributing Writer*

The class of 2028 elected Jeffrey Teh '28 and Namrita Ghani '28 as their first year senators last week, as the pair from a pool with four other candidates. Sixty-three percent of voters cast one of their two votes for Teh (119 total votes), while 40% of voters cast one of their votes for Ghani (74 total votes). One-hundred and eighty-seven total students voted, which was approximately the same voter turnout of the same election two years ago, although turnout ran below the 47% who voted last April in the presidential election.

Both Teh and Ghani ran on the platform of getting to know their peers and asking about their concerns.

"You should know who your senator is, and your senator should be proactive in figuring out what people want by asking," Teh told The Campus after being elected.

Each candidate went door to door through first year dorms, introducing themselves and asking students about their concerns.

"Whenever I went to the door, I wasn't just knocking at their door, telling them about myself," Teh said. "I was asking people what they wanted."

By election day, Sept. 24, most first year students had only been on campus for three weeks.

"We simply haven't been here long enough to find a clear-cut issue on campus that needs to be solved," Ghani said in an interview with The Campus after being elected. In an effort to entice prospective voters, she brought homemade brownies with her while knocking on doors.

"[I wanted them to] put a face to the name instead of just seeing a poster," Ghani added.

The job of the first year senators is to represent their class in the Student Government Association's (SGA) Student Senate and to lead the first year committee, which is made up of six to eight other members of the class of 2028 tasked with building community, addressing student concerns, promoting campus resources and working with event planning bodies, according to an email to The Campus from SGA Operations. First year senators are able to choose the students who make up the committee from an applicant pool.

A record 17 students showed up to the mandatory interest meeting on Sept. 19 for potential candidates for senator, though only six were on the ballot come election day. In order to get their name on the ballot, candidates first needed to fill out an application and attend the interest meeting. Next, they had to submit 25 peer signatures, a headshot and a 250 word speech by Sunday, Sept. 22, according to SGA Operations.

The six candidates delivered their two minute speeches on the stage in Wilson Café to a crowd of no more than thirty first years at its peak. The attendance and environment was similar to that of last year's turnout, according to Veronika Breton '25, co-director of SGA Operations, who noted that there was not a strong precedent for high student engagement in this area of SGA.

"One of our goals is to have first years more engaged," Breton added.

Ghani, who gave her speech third, said that despite projecting confidence on stage, she was nervous beforehand. In her speech, she said she would aim to match the energy of the first years' orientation week, use her global perspective to best understand and represent the diverse first year class, and listen to her peers. A copy of each candidate's speech was sent in an email to all first years the morning of the election.

Teh, with no printed-out speech and dressed in an unbuttoned blazer, confidently recited his speech last, where he repeated the words "we," "you" and "together." He highlighted his view that "transparent student government is more than too-long-to-read emails and a feedback form on the website. It means publicizing each and every thing we do on social media for all of you to see."

The speeches ended only 15 minutes after the event started, but the few voters who attended appeared energized.

"It was really exciting to hear so many voices of people that are excited and passionate about making the school like a better place," said Anna Armstrong '28, who attended the event.

Zaina Mahbub '28 echoed Armstrong's enthusiasm for the race and the candidates vying to represent the first year class.

"I'm excited to see the different things whoever becomes senator will bring and do for us, and I hope that they'll be a good ear for all of us," Mahbub said.

Noah Vogel '25, who served as a senator during his first year on campus, recalled that his role gave him rare leadership experience as a first-year and the opportunity to get to know Middlebury at a different level. What he remembers most, though, is getting to know and work with his co-senator at the time.

"We're two very different people who came from very different circles, so if it weren't for SGA, I don't see our paths crossing," Vogel said.

As newly elected co-senators, Ghani and Teh share a passion for connecting with students, and hope that by being attentive listeners, they can identify the most pressing issues to their class. They both plan to hold office hours in student lounges where first-years can go to share their concerns.

"There are little miscellaneous things that need to be fixed, but I think as we progress, we'll find bigger issues... So I think it's too early to say what our agenda is. It's more to listen to what other people's issues are and try our best to find a solution," Ghani said.

COURTESY PHOTOS

*Namrita Ghani and Jefferey Teh will represent the class of 2028 in SGA as first-year senators.*

# CLUB SPORTS CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE FOR FUNDING, RESOURCES WITHIN TIER SYSTEM

*Continued from Page 1*

a tier one team, they struggle to find and retain coaches.

"One of the biggest issues Midd Crew has faced in recent years is frequent turnover in coaches. We are currently in our third coaching transition in two years. We are beyond grateful for the hard work of our assistant coaches who have stuck around through the chaos," Harring wrote in an email to The Campus.

Harring also attributed the struggle to find a coach to the fact that the crew team competes against varsity programs, but has club status at the college.

"I think that it is hard to find a coach as a club team that is competitive among other club teams and D-3 varsity programs," she wrote.

This fall, the crew team will be coached primarily by Rich Connell. He was formerly the head coach of the crew team but accepted a new role as assistant director of outdoor programs at the college last fall. Connell stepped in to coach again this fall after the team failed to find a new coach for the 2024–2025 season.

Despite the complications that come with having a coach, the leaders of clubs like rugby and crew acknowledged the privilege of being a tier one club sport.

"For me, being a Tier 1 club sport is the closest acknowledgement crew will get to a varsity status. Although we have to supplement the SAO funding with our own fundraising and gift account, we do get the benefit of more competitions and two full racing seasons," co-president Audrey Maxwell '25 wrote in an email to The Campus.

Across tiers, club sport leaders expressed a common frustration over coordinating logistics with the SAO in recent years due to the system's complexity and at times adversarial relationships between clubs and the office.

"Navigating communication with SAO also has a lot of moving parts due to the shared responsibilities between different people in the office," Ly said.

Maxwell said at one point, coordinating with the SAO was a major challenge of club sport logistics for the crew team as they felt ignored.

"At the beginning of my time at Midd, SAO seemed to be the opposition, something limiting us or not listening to our concerns. This feeling came to a head in the spring of 2023 when we started talking about the search for a new head coach," Maxwell wrote, adding that in recent times their relationship has improved substantially. "We've had more consistent meetings, and feel that communication between leadership and the SAO office is now a core part of our season transitions."

Though frustrations about the configuration of club sports persist, dedication to keeping the non-varsity athletics scene vibrant remains strong. Presidents and captains of club sports teams remain passionate about preserving access to athletic opportunities and getting as many students as possible involved with their organizations. Haugen, Siefer, Harring, Ly and Maxwell all emphasized the inclusive nature of club sports, and each expressed the importance of club sports to their Middlebury experience.

"The importance of sports cannot be overstated," Haugen said, co-president of men's club soccer. Haugen felt strongly about the role of club sports in facilitating interpersonal connection, especially for new students. He described meeting some of his best friends during his first year on the team.

"I think club sports are a great opportunity for underclassmen to meet people while having a community and mutual activity to enjoy. When I was a freshman, I was immediately introduced to both a ton of upperclassmen and a ton of kids my year. I feel like it can be more difficult for some students to meet people, and I think that club sports do bridge that gap," Haugen wrote in an email to The Campus.

"Club sports are so important, and Midd Crew has been a hallmark of my Middlebury experience," Harring wrote. "With the wide variety of sports and levels of commitment, people can get outside, be active, and find community. Each club sport has their own community that keeps people coming back."

# UNDERPAID AND UNDERSTAFFED:

## WHY MIDDLEBURY IS LOSING ITS LIBRARIANS

DAVID ZHAO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

*The Davis Family Library atrium.*

*Continued from Page 1*

department in July 2022. In this system, salary ranges are determined based on market data from the previous year at other institutions the college claims are its peers. An employee's pay within that range is then determined by their manager's assessment of their performance, placing them in one of four categories: "learning," "growing," "thriving" or "leading."

Ellis and Terry Simpkins, director of discovery & access services, identified several problems with this system of compensation that have impacted positions at the library in particular.

The salary of many librarians who have already hit the "leading" mark is too close to the top of the market-determined range of pay to allow them to continue to receive raises, as this system implements a cap on their pay that did previously exist. The only way to improve their salaries is to be promoted to a higher position, but there are not always opportunities to do so.

"The fact that we have hard caps on our salaries just tends to discourage people — even if they come in and they're not at the top of the range, I think knowing that there's a hard cap will make people second guess whether they want to work here," Simpkins said.

The market that the skill matrix uses to determine salaries does not include many of Middlebury's top peer institutions, such as Amherst College and Williams College. It instead draws from larger colleges and universities with much smaller endowments than Middlebury, lowering the average salary to which the skill matrix is calibrated. This is the largest factor that lowers the pay of librarians in comparison to what their salary would have been under the guise of the previous compensation system, according to Ellis. She also pointed out that employees in the "thriving" category also only receive the market average pay despite their performance.

Ellis and Simpkins also explained that the system does not account for inflation. Simpkins stated that Human Resources may view the market analysis as a proxy for inflation, however, the data from market assessments is drawn from the previous year and is therefore not up-to-date with current inflation rates. It is also taken from institutions that are not in Vermont, where inflation is significantly higher than in other states. The current system also does not take the local high cost of living — which prompts many staff members to commute long distances, including from New York — into consideration.

When the Board of Trustees met in Davis Family Library during their biannual visit to campus to discuss and vote on the year's budget last spring, Ellis, Simpkins and two other librarians spoke to trustees about their dissatisfaction with the comparison market and skill matrix system. Ellis recalled sharing copies of The Campus' April 4 staff issue — whose front page features the headline "After nearly two years, staff still give mixed reviews on 'skill matrix' compensation system" — with several board members, hoping to further attract their attention to the problem.

However, the only significant change made to the system for this year resulted in still less additional pay for many college staff members: Discretionary pay, a previous third component of the skill matrix system designed to recognize exceptional work, was completely eliminated from the budget.

In previous years, this extra money was given to supervisors, who could allocate it in increments of $500 to up to $3,000 per staff member to recognize especially strong performance in a given year. The college's total budget for discretionary pay this year was planned to be $400,000, but Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration David Provost announced to staff at the end of last spring that the college's Senior Leadership Team assessed the Board of Trustee-approved budget for this year and was unable to provide the funds, Simpkins told The Campus.

"I remember thinking, this feels like a bait and switch," Simpkins said. "Compared to the overall budget, [400,000] is a pittance. If you have somebody making $40,000–50,000 a year, $3,000 is a lot of money for them. That really just hit home for me. The staff should be the last place that the college cuts. It feels like often, we're one of the first on the chopping block.."

This change, the understaffing in the library and the high rate of employee turnover means that librarians are simultaneously facing limited pay and higher workloads. Three librarian positions were also eliminated after their previous holders left during the Covid-19 pandemic: a part-time Assistant to the Dean of the Library, a librarian working in preservation of government documents, and a Literature and Cultures Research Librarian, causing the same workload to be distributed among fewer people.

Roy has heard faculty members express concern over a lack of liaisons to direct their library-related questions to. With less staff, Roy explained, liaison assignments have gone unfilled. Faculty is instead directed to an email inbox to submit their questions, which the appropriate librarian will answer.

"It's much less personal and personalized: It's a triage of just asking questions but not developing relationships," Roy said.

Staffing the research desk has also been difficult and will pose further obstacles with Ellis' position now vacant. Librarians calculated the hours that attracted the most questions from students — Sunday to Friday from 1–5 p.m — and hired Research Librarian Chris Glass part-time to help cover these slots. However, Mondays will soon be eliminated due to Ellis' departure, according to Alyssa Wright, director of research, instruction and data services. This is a reduction from the library's hours from previous semesters, which started at 11 a.m Mondays to Wednesdays and included evenings. Beginning Oct. 29, Glass will cover evening hours from 7–10 p.m on Tuesdays to assist with midterms.

Research librarians have had to conduct consultations with students in areas outside of their specialties, pitching in extra hours to ensure that every student can get the help that they're seeking, according to Ellis. She said that temporarily taking on more liaison departments and instruction have been the biggest factors in increasing her and her colleagues' workloads.

Simpkins has had to take on extra tasks helping to set up the library's new cataloging system — work the vacant position of Cataloging Librarian would normally complete.

"I've been trying to pick up the slack with rushes, things that are ordered specifically for people, ordered by faculty, those need to get in there so that you can use them, so I make sure some of that stuff gets done to help support the other cataloger," Simpkins said.

Longer-term projects such as working on the data repository and user experience studies of the library's website have been pushed to the side to prioritize student-facing tasks, according to Wright and Roy. Ellis shared that another challenge has been pushing long-term projects aside to prioritize training the library's several new employees. New librarians may have experience from elsewhere but be unfamiliar with Middlebury's specific systems, which can take some time to learn.

"Middlebury is expensive, much smaller, much more high-touch, much more customized to the student experience. When you bring people from the outside they may or may not have that kind of experience to share," Ellis said. "A lot of what I do is through collaboration and a lot of the people I collaborate with left. Now we're short staffed so we don't have the time to develop those relationships."

Roy echoed Ellis' concerns about the strain of high employee turnover on the library.

"I've also been spending more and more time thinking about the culture of the library, realizing that if you've had the amount of turnover that we've had and if 40 percent of the staff is new, just the kind of tacit knowledge that people gain with decades working at an organization is all lost," Roy said.

The search for a new Science and Data Librarian and Cataloging Librarian has been underway for well over a year, the search for a new Film and Media Librarian will launch this fall and the search to fill Ellis' position will begin in January. However, multiple librarians reiterated that the hiring process is long, as candidates must undergo multiple rounds of interviews, visit campus and decide on whether to take the job if given an offer.

Ellis spoke to the demoralization and discouragement that her and her colleagues have faced at work in recent years, calling on the college and the Board of Trustees to devote greater attention to the true costs of eliminating positions and high rates of turnover.

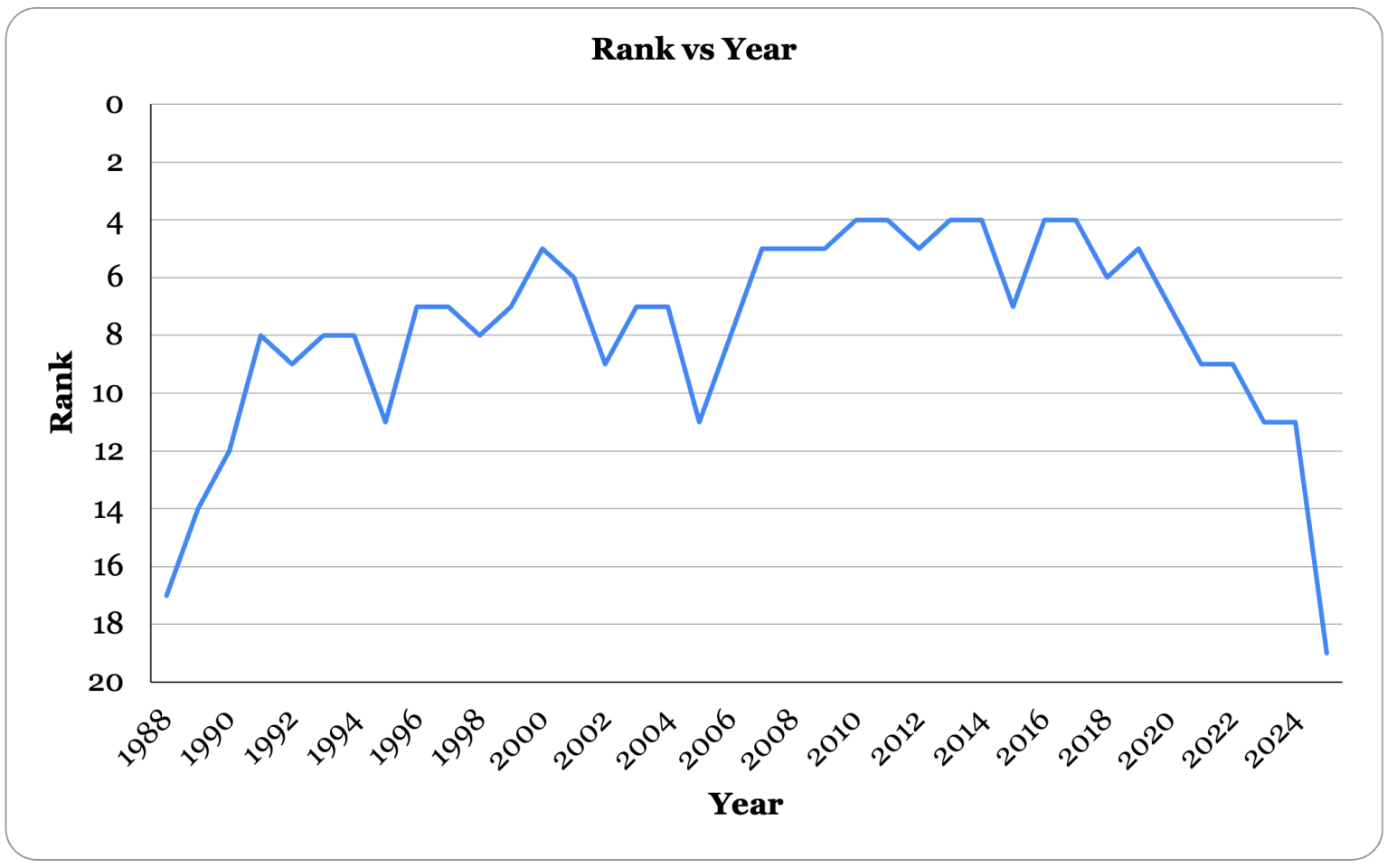
"It's demoralizing to stay in a situation that you feel was not as good as it was just a few years ago, it's demoralizing that all the people you worked with and really cared about are gone," she said. "It has increased the stress and it affects work life balance and family life, which affects people's health," Ellis said. "The college administration and Trustees need to think about how there's an impact of higher healthcare costs, and there's the financial impact of the cost of turnover and reduced productivity. Those kind of costs never go into spreadsheets. They're being penny wise and pound foolish."

As a member of Staff Council and the Chair of the Compensation and Benefits Committee, Simpkins emphasized that he believes Human Resources has staff's best interests in mind, and noted that Caitlin Goss, vice president of Human Resources, is only one voice on the Senior Leadership Team. In Simpkins' conversations with the Board of Trustees on this issue, members have cited the deficits created by the poor financial decisions — decisions which the Board approved — of previous College President Ron Lebowitz as justification for tightening the current budget.

"There were some bad decisions made about where we're spending our money," Simpkins said. "That money could be better used maybe in different ways, and those are hard conversations to have because those would mean serious changes to the college, but I am skeptical that until those decisions are made, that things are really going to get much better."

# Middlebury falls to 19th in U.S. News & World Report ranking

*Continued from Page 1*




HUGO ZHANG/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

*Middlebury's ranking in the U.S. News & World Report fell to its lowest position since it first participated in the ranking in 1988.*

performance in rankings, as leaves of absence during that period led to higher student enrollment and fluctuating graduation rates. Additionally, Middlebury's test-optional policy have played a role in seemingly huge shifts in the ranking

"Our priority is to fulfill our academic mission — to prepare students to lead engaged, consequential, and creative lives, contribute to their communities and address the world's most challenging problems," Ferrante wrote. "Rather than prioritizing factors that influence any one ranking, we are focused on those that align with our mission and provide an exceptional educational experience."

Dean of Admissions Nicole Curvin wrote in an email to The Campus that, despite dropping in the U.S. News rankings, interest in Middlebury is unaffected.

"Interest in Middlebury remains robust, and our holistic admissions process is highly selective... For the incoming class of 2028, we admitted 12% of applicants," she wrote. "We [admissions officers] hear that Middlebury's reputation as a highly regarded liberal arts and sciences institution has not changed."

This sentiment is echoed by some students, including Dani Pham '28.

"For me, the value of school includes the social life, abroad opportunities, things to do around the city. Academics is important but at some point all schools offer the same outcome," Pham wrote. "Even though there is a decline in ranking, the faculty and opportunities are still the same, and the curriculum is still teaching me how to think critically so Middlebury's overall value remains the same to me."

Nevertheless, some faculty members expressed concerns about the decline and the underlying causes, noting that Middlebury's lower performance in the rankings did not just begin this year. Professor of Film and Media Studies Jason Mittell pointed out the flawed nature of the rankings and acknowledged the impact they may have on perception of the college.

"We all know that these rankings have many flaws in their ability to quantify and compare very complex college experiences, yet they have a significant impact on our institutional reputation," Mittell wrote in an email to The Campus.

"Based on what we know now, the decline does seem to reflect some significant changes that many faculty have witnessed at Middlebury over the past decade: increasing enrollment, larger classes, and decreased financial support for the core undergraduate college," Mittell wrote.

Henry N. Hudson Professor of English Marion Wells echoed Mittell's concerns, and expressed that the college should view the drop in rankings as a call to action.

"This precipitous ratings drop is one serious signal among others that the college needs to look carefully at its priorities to ensure that the core areas of the undergraduate academic experience at Middlebury receive the focus and resources they deserve," Wells wrote in an email to The Campus.

As faculty and others pointed out, rankings cannot fully define a college, since many important factors — such as culture and living conditions — are unquantifiable but vital to students' college experience. Nevertheless, shifts in rankings can serve as a tool for evaluating a college's operations from various angles, but may cause unnecessary stress if thought about for too long.

"These rankings make most of us feel great when we are ranked highly and make a few nervous nellies freak out when we drop," he wrote. "I would venture to say that we probably weren't the 4th-best college when we were ranked 4th and probably aren't 19th today, but rather somewhere in between."

*Editor's Note: Jason Mittell is the faculty advisor to The Campus.*

# COLLEGE, SUMMIT PROPERTIES HOPE TO BEGIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT BY THE END OF YEAR

COURTESY PHOTO/ SUMMIT PROPERTIES

*Stonecrop Meadow will provide permanently affordable rental homes for residents with a range of income levels*

*Continued from Page 1*

from community members who do not want to see the composition of their neighborhoods change or property values to depreciate.

As the project developed, Summit hosted community feedback sessions where the people of Middlebury could come and hear about the plans, as well as voice their concerns, hesitations or support.

"Most of the feedback has been extremely positive, even from a large number of the most impacted/closest neighbors," said Andy Hooper, a town of Middlebury Selectboard member.

However, opinions were not entirely uniform. Some local residents have expressed concerns about the environmental impact and increased stress on the town's existing infrastructure, particularly the five-corner intersection of Seminary and Washington Street, as well as the Means Woods off the Seminary Street extension, according to Hooper. Last fall, several residents voiced concerns largely about the impact on stormwater at a meeting for the Middlebury Development Review Board, according to the Addison Independent. In response to these concerns, Summit has conducted studies to make sure environmental impact is limited, particularly in the wetlands surrounding the parcel.

Summit COO Zeke Davisson told The Campus he was surprised by the overwhelming support for the project, adding that some people even wished the project would be even larger. He believes that this demonstrates the shared value placed on the need to address Vermont's housing crisis.

"We found that not only were people not balking at the density we were proposing, they asked why we couldn't push the envelope further," Davisson said. "I think that sentiment reflected two things: first, that the housing problem has become so bad that people are finding motivation to support and lift up housing projects in a way that didn't historically elicit that reaction. Second, that the parcel in question is the Town's best opportunity for smart-growth development."

Housing and the rising cost of living in Vermont were recently highlighted in a series of panels, lectures and community events — including a presentation on Summit's ongoing project — as part of the college's annual Clifford Symposium.

The college's involvement with the project, however, goes back several years to when Middlebury initially explored a partnership with Summit Property Management. According to Davisson, in 2022, the college hoped to see if any of their current land holdings could be used to develop affordable workforce housing. At the time, zoning laws and existing infrastructure did not accommodate for large scale affordable development on any existing properties.

Soon after, however, a large plot of land went onto the market in an area conducive to affordable housing. The college bought the 35-acre property for $1.5 million from Marjorie Mooney and selected Summit as the developer for the project, which had an estimated cost at the time of approximately $40 million..

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the state of Vermont received funds under the American Rescue Plan Act, a portion of which was allocated specifically for housing development. The state of Vermont approved 40% of the total ARPA housing funding for Stonecrop Meadows.

According to the Addison County Economic Development CorporationSummit has received multiple grants that would help fund the project, including a grant of $1 million from Community Development Block. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board approved $5,670,000 for Summit's project in a meeting last May to help subsidize the cost of building the first 35-unit apartment building. The rest of the project will be funded through tax credits.

While the initiative is just one incremental step toward relieving the housing crisis, it is a step in a positive direction. Alongside Middlebury, various other towns in Vermont are developing an estimated total of 1341 housing units, according to the state of Vermont's Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

"[Summit will] begin construction on the infrastructure portions (roads, water/sewer extension, stormwater retention ponds, etc.) before the end of 2024. That would put us in a position to begin constructing and selling homes by the summer of 2025," Davisson said, adding that they hope to do the same for the apartment complex by 2026.

# TOWN PETITION PROPOSES RENEWED BUSINESS TAX FOR DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

By LANGAN GARRETT
*Contributing Writer*

The town of Middlebury has begun seeking signatories for its petition to renew the Downtown Improvement District Commission (DIDC) and its associated taxes for local business owners for the fourth time. Every seven years, the town must send out a petition asking for consent to an additional tax on downtown businesses meant to fund improvements to the downtown area; the current agreement will expire on June 30, 2025.

The goal of the DIDC — which has been successfully renewed three previous times — is to boost foot traffic and commerce in Middlebury, according to a statement by the town of Middlebury promoted in the Addison Independent.

Fred Dunnington, a former town planner in Middlebury, explained the history behind the DIDC, sharing that the town has faced recurring issues with limited access to downtown businesses and parking.

"Merchants felt that it was inadequate parking, so in order to raise funds to build parking lots, like the Froghollow Parking Lot, which was at that point not yet built, I proposed the idea of an assessment district, which would assess the downtown merchants whose properties were deficient in parking," Dunnington said. "The idea is that the amount of taxation is not greater than the amount by which your property is benefited from the improvements."

The DIDC primarily addresses downtown-based improvements such as the maintenance of sidewalks, the installation of light fixtures, the addition of new flags on the flag poles and general cosmetic and smaller infrastructural upkeeps.

Larger infrastructural changes are typically supplemented by funding from the state or federal government, depending on the nature of the project, according to Amey Ryan, a real estate broker with IJP Real Estate.

"There have been improvement projects that have been funded by BTrans, the state of Vermont, or the federal government, or the town of Middlebury. Those larger improvement projects are basically more infrastructure related, and are not anything that is within the DIDC wheelhouse," Ryan said.

She added that there are contingencies to the petition that clarify how the money will be raised and what it will be spent on.

"It includes non-residential properties, so it is mostly just commercial and business properties, and the money is collected at the same time regular taxes are collected," Ryan said. "The DIDC includes improvements that are made to the downtown, and then years ago, the DIDC recognized that the work the Better Middlebury Partnership was doing was sort of supplemental to the DIDC's mission."

Dunnington was involved in the original proposal to amend the charter with a new ordinance that provided funds through the additional tax to support the improvements of the downtown area.

Since 1996, the DIDC has raised nearly $30,000 every year, which was then matched by Downtown Grant funds.

Ryan also emphasized that the DIDC's partnership with the Better Middlebury Partnership (BMP) has contributed to the increase of public-facing events in town, such as the Midd Summer Market, the Fall Family Weekend market that happened on Oct. 28, the upcoming annual Middlebury Car Show & Fall Festival and Very Merry Middlebury. The BMP is also in charge of the Middlebury Money Program.

Dunnington also supported renewing the petition in perpetuity.

"[I] proposed the idea that the term could continue until the business owners petition to do away with it, which is a term, in one sense," Dunnington said.

An automatic continuous renewal of the petition has not yet been approved by the business stakeholders in town.

The board of the DIDC meets every year to determine how the funds will be utilized in the upcoming fiscal year. Dunnington explained that there are usually nine board members, including the town manager. For a renewal to pass, 65 of the 95 business constituents must sign the petition.

Dunnington shared that businesses farther from the main improvement areas feel that the taxes are less necessary.

"There are some people who, in the district, who are further away from the park improvements or the lighting, and they don't see the benefits are so pertinent and direct to them, and you know, but attracting people to the downtown does increase business generally," Dunnington added.

The renewal meeting scheduled on Oct. 8 will seek to extend the petition for an additional seven years to continue improving the downtown area.

MANDY BERGHELA / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
*The renewal meeting for the DIDC is scheduled for October 8th, proposing an additional tax on downtown businesses intended to support improvements in the area.*

# MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY COME TOGETHER TO DISCUSS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, WOMEN IN POLITICS

By MANDY BERGHELA
*Senior Local Editor*

On Sunday afternoon, people from all over Vermont gathered at the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society (CVUUS) for a meaningful dialogue featuring former Vermont Governor Howard Dean, gubernatorial candidate Esther Charlestin and Addie Lentzner '27, a delegate to the 2024 Democratic National Convention (DNC). The dialogue focused on the importance of active participation in democracy, especially by women and young people. The speakers explored how everyone can engage more deeply in civic life, not only by voting in the upcoming presidential election, but also by taking part in local elections and community decision-making.

The open community event, named "Practicing Democracy: Women in Public Office," was put together by the Early Care and Learning Project, a nonpartisan nonprofit whose mission is to "improve the wellbeing of all children and families in Addison County and beyond."

Cheryl Mitchell, one of the organizers of the event and member of Middlebury Friends Meeting, a Quaker society in Middlebury, initially sought to create an event that highlighted specific local and national candidates. However, due to restrictions in the CVUUS space which prohibit partisan political work, she and the other organizers shifted the focus of the event to the importance of civic engagement.

"This event is the outcome of a group of us coming together to think about what we could do, and we recognize that supporting candidates who share our values is such an important action," Mitchell said in her opening address. "However, this event is not about political action, rather about how we can each be more engaged in creating the world we would like for our children and grandchildren."

The event began with a half-hour talk by the special guest speakers. Instead of a traditional Q&A session, attendees were invited to visit various action tables set up around the venue, each showcasing different ways people can become more engaged and involved in their communities. The tables included postcard and letter-writing stations where attendees could write to voters in other states, sign-ups for national organizations, canvassing opportunities, guides on hosting election watch parties, youth civic involvement, a kids' activity table and many others all related to civic engagement.

Lentzner was the first to speak. She talked about the importance of youth civic engagement and her experience as a delegate at the 2024 DNC.

"We truly do have the ability to affect change, whether through protest or advocacy or running for office ourselves," Lentzner said in her opening remarks. "Life is about more than just one issue, it is about all of them together intersecting to create a world where we have hope, justice and love, and of course we do not agree on everything, and sometimes we don't agree on anything, but we all just want a future where we can live, so I urge you to go out and have those difficult conversations."

Lentzner founded the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that has donated hundreds of books to children across Vermont, written two pieces of legislation, received the NAACP Youth Activism Award in 2022 and led a campaign to secure housing for people experiencing homelessness, which resulted in an executive order to provide shelter — along with many other impactful initiatives.

"Being at the convention, and being with so many young people who had different perspectives, made me see it is possible for us to come together," Lentzner said in an interview with The Campus later that evening. "It is a possibility, we just need to be engaged. We are all so busy, but it is important not to see it as another extracurricular activity to be politically engaged, but to just see it as life, and building a better community for all of us to be in."

Charlestin, the current Democratic nominee for Vermont governor, also spoke about her own journey getting engaged into politics after moving to Vermont in 2019.

"I decided to get involved. It was 2020, and I felt all things were possible," Charlestin said. "2020 was the year we could mail in our ballots, and I wrote my name in the ballot, as a sign that I am a part of this community."

Two years later, Charlestin had been elected to the town of Middlebury selectboard in 2021 and was reelected again in 2022. Charlestin had also worked as the Dean of Climate & Culture in the Addison County School District, but resigned due to an experience with racism.

Charlestin observed that women are more often asked by others to run for office rather than deciding to launch campaigns on their own, adding that when women are not represented, decisions are made without their input.

Charlestin also highlighted the organization Emerge, which helped train her and other women to run for office, along with building a network of women who work together and support each other.

Many other options for attendee involvement were discussed, as well as opportunities for others not in attendance. Attendees had the opportunity to learn more about canvassing, which is a form of outreach typically done through door-to-door visits, phone calls, or tabling at public events. Its main goal is to inform voters, gauge public opinion, and persuade voters to support a particular candidate. Anyone can get involved in canvassing in major swing states, like New Hampshire, through websites such as Mobilize U.S, which highlights local canvassing opportunities.

Former Vermont Governor and 2004 presidential candidate Howard Dean gave remarks at the event, which drew significant attention from the audience due to his several years of experience in public service. He emphasized that elected officials should always remember that their salaries are funded by voters and should be held accountable to the public. He urged people to recognize the power of their voices and to ensure they are heard.

"We are lucky enough to have a democratic system in our country," Dean said. "Organize, get out there, do what you believe in, encourage the generation switching, as it is time to pass this on to a new generation, so I hope that Gen Z gets out there and votes."

MANDY BERGHELA / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
*Members of the Middlebury community and beyond came together to talk about the importance of civic engagement and how to get involved.*

# WE NEED TO TALK

## Op-Ed

***Rachel Peck*** *is a member of the class of 2025.*

I've been Jewish my whole life. Coming from a very non-Jewish part of the United Kingdom, I have always been open and loud about my Jewish identity. I've experienced my fair share of anti-semitism. I remember, without fondness, the swastikas drawn by fingers on early morning bus window condensation on my way to school. I also remember when my freshman year neighbor joked that there was "sch-money" in our corner of Hepburn Hall after finding out there were several Jewish people living there. I remember how alienated I felt after that, but also how that alienation dissipated when I went to Middlebury Hillel that Friday. The British Jewish experience is radically different in many ways from its American counterpart, but at Hillel, those differences aren't obstacles to community. If anything, our ability to be in community despite what pulls us apart is what makes us stronger.

Earlier this semester, a group of Jewish students received an email from President Laurie Patton inviting them to take part in a planning meeting for an "equity initiative" geared towards combating anti-semitism on campus. It's unclear how the invited students were selected, but some were those who currently or have previously held positions on Hillel board, engaged in Jewish studies events or classes, or in other ways were known to the administration as having a stake in the Jewish experience.

But I wasn't invited. Despite being on the Hillel board for over a year, despite shaking hands with Patton at her home when she hosted a Chanukah candle lighting. Earlier this semester I did not receive an email inviting me to be a part of the anti-semitism equity initiative.

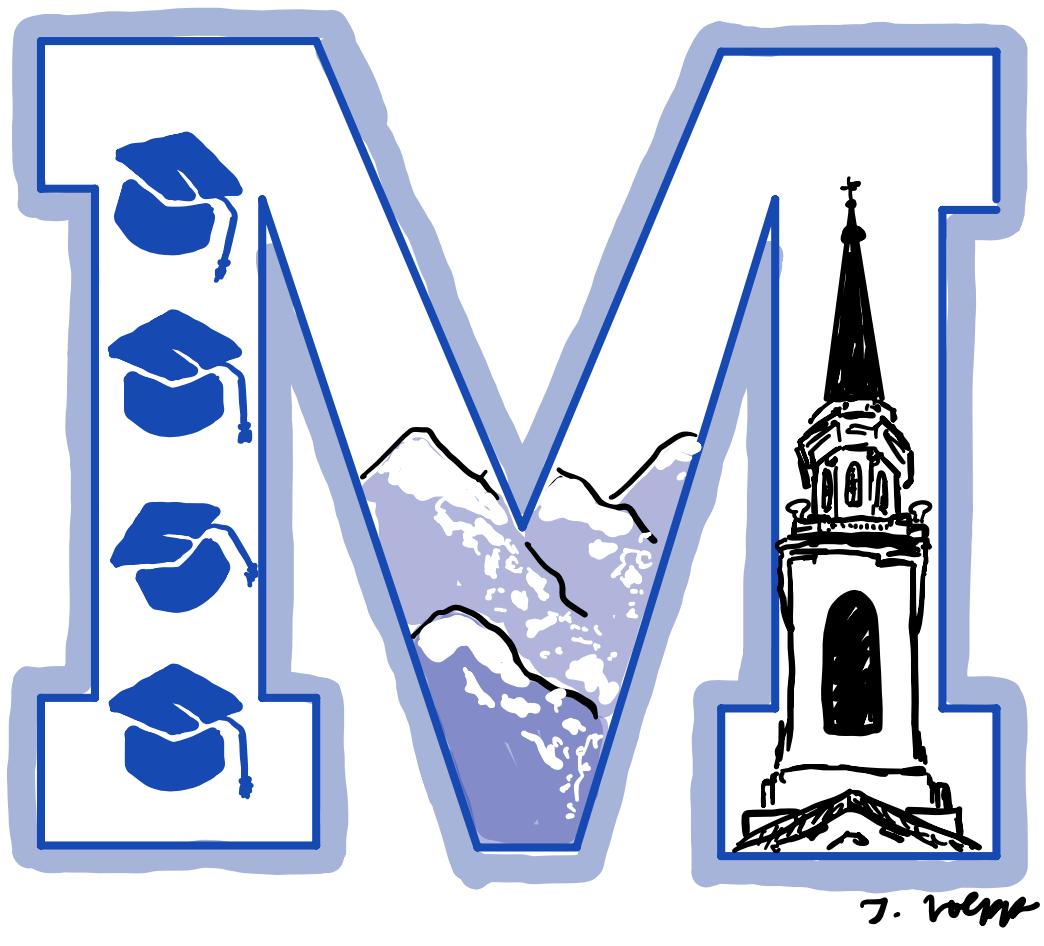
I did, however, receive an email inviting me to the anti-Islamophobia initiative. I received an invitation to a planning meeting for an "equity initiative that will provide Middlebury College with a better understanding of history, climate, and culture as it relates to anti-Palestinian, Anti-Arab discrimination, and Islamophobia." This felt like a bizarre email for me to receive because, notably, I am not Palestinian, Arab or Muslim, and therefore have never experienced any discrimination for being those identities.

I didn't quite understand at first why I would have been invited to one and not the other. It wasn't until I really sat with the bad taste it left in my mouth that I realized: It seems that I lost my right in the eyes of the administration to have a voice as a Jewish person when I started publicly expressing my condemnation of the sheer scale of military actions taken by the Israeli state since Oct. 7. The term "self-hating Jew" is an upsetting one often used when a Jewish person speaks out against the actions of Israel.

I bring up this term because it speaks to an inability to reconcile that one can be proudly Jewish and against anti-semitism while simultaneously being proudly pro-Palestinian and against Islamophobic rhetoric. Despite constantly encouraging us to be nuanced and multifaceted human beings, Middlebury College could not accept one facet of my identity without minimizing the other. It was perfectly acceptable when I was just Jewish and I avoided speaking about Israel at all costs: That was palatable. But once I started expressing a dissenting opinion, that palatability quickly dissolved.

Here's the thing: It has never been a more challenging task to facilitate a community that engages and welcomes you no matter what your relationship to Judaism or Israel might be. The worst thing that we could possibly do in response to these circumstances would be to stop talking altogether, stop trying to understand each other, and run away from the possibility of discomfort or disagreement. If we start adjudicating who does and does not have a right to speak on the Jewish experience as they have lived it, we will doom ourselves to be permanently and irrevocably divided and weak in the face of adversity when it comes.

I know this because when the Gaza Solidarity Encampment was launched last spring, I had a friend who has Zionist values and greatly opposed its existence. All these months later, she is still my friend. Our friendship actually got stronger through it because of one vital thing we did: we kept talking. We kept listening. That lifeline is the only way through: We must keep doing these things — talking, listening. When all else fails: we need to talk.




# *A liberal arts education won't cost you your career, we promise*

## Editorial

*The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.*

As conversations on campus and in the national discourse continue on the value of a liberal arts education, we chose this week to reflect on what the liberal arts can and should provide to Middlebury students in the 21st century. A distinction has emerged in the past decade between those who find the liberal arts antiquated in the 2010s and 2020s — suggesting instead that post-secondary education be primarily a path to learning employable skills — and those who firmly believe that the liberal arts remain educationally and personally relevant.

In this time of tension over the meaning of higher education, we advocate for a middle ground between a liberal arts pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and technical skill building meant to prepare students for future careers. A love of learning can coexist with the reality of post-graduate employment and the senior-year stress that comes to anyone on the job hunt. Middlebury can educate the mind and build our careers at once; the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) can and should coexist with the Public Humanities Labs.

We assert that Middlebury is capable of being an attractive institution for students interested in learning and students interested in gaining employable skills. Furthermore, the distinction between those two things may not always be as stark as some suggest. In fact, we believe most Middlebury students want both a path of variety that leads to both personal intellectual enrichment and their desired career path. One board member mentioned that you cannot force someone to be intellectually curious, and while that is a reality of education, that cannot be a license for the institution to refrain from demonstrating the importance of curricular breadth.

A key point of discussion was the idea of the first year seminar, which prompted a variety of positive and negative anecdotes from board members. We believe that the first year seminar should work to correct for the inequities of differing high school learning experiences across matriculating students.

According to Middlebury, the mission of the first year seminar is to "familiarize recent high-school graduates with the standards for college-level work in thinking, speaking, writing, and contributing to an academic community." This is an important goal, and one that the institution should strive to accomplish by reforming the program as it currently exists. Through our discussion on the role of the course, we found that students experience major differences in the rigor and scope of their first year seminar. This is an unfortunate reality for students who do not receive the close mentorship and emphasis on writing skills necessary to succeed in the future.

In order to improve the course, there must be more enforceable standardized expectations for students and professors alike. We believe all first year seminar courses should conclude at the end of the semester with some kind of long formal writing assignment. The school should ensure that all first years have an equal opportunity to practice writing and analysis no matter which department they study in. It should retain the small class sizes that will enable professors to devote closer attention to each student, in keeping with the spirit of the liberal arts.

The board, although populated by History, English and other humanities majors, recognized the extra demands placed on students studying science, math and economics at the college. The college should work to foster opportunities for students in math and science departments to pursue their interests within their major and to explore the full spectrum of the college's offerings in the liberal arts.

We question the effectiveness of the distribution requirements for STEM students, which often allow them to choose classes widely known as easy to pass for the sake of focusing on their otherwise intense workload. Distribution requirements shouldn't be merely a reprieve — they are there because they are instruments of Middlebury's liberal arts promise. Departments must program their courses to ensure that students can gain the depth from their major and the earnest exposure to other fields that they deserve.

One solution proposed by board members was placing a heavier emphasis on the history, sociology and humanities-based aspects of instructed STEM material within the STEM courses themselves. This is already partially accomplished by some STEM courses that meet the College Writing (CW) requirement, an aspect of the curriculum we believe could use refinement similar to the first year seminar. If students understand the larger implications of their technical and scientific work in the world, Middlebury will have accomplished its goal of supporting students interested in pursuing STEM careers and of bestowing them with a broad liberal arts education.

The need to discuss what Middlebury's educational ethos is has become even more important in light of ongoing proposals to modify the number of credits required for graduation, Middlebury's eight distribution requirements and more. As we seek to reform the way our institution teaches and what it values most, we call for students and faculty alike to seek a middle ground between the purely theoretical and the purely practical to find a career after graduation. The best way to signal our dedication to education is through the first year seminar — the very first class Middlebury students enroll in here.

While we enjoy our four fleeting years at the college, wrapped up in chemistry textbooks, Plato's "Republic" and numerous scholarly articles, our futures are equally dependent on a balance between career and cultivation. It's possible to do both — we promise.

# OUR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES MAY NOT BE OUR FAULT, BUT THEY ARE OUR PROBLEM

## Op-Ed

***Samuel West Robertson*** *is a member of the class of 2026.*

Sometimes I think I would have been better off at the University of Minnesota. I was apprehensive, coming to Middlebury: I was worried about the rural setting — I'm a city kid — as well as the cost and the potentially stifling small size. I have seasonal depression, so I was also worried about the winter. Still, I looked beyond my anxieties and came here with an open mind.

In fact, the experience of my first year here was roughly what I expected it to be. I made good friends, and my classes were interesting, but my mental health was terrible. I was experiencing all of the typical depression symptoms, but more intensely than I had before. I wanted to flee to somewhere bigger, sunnier and more urban. I called my mother and told her that I wanted to transfer. She was supportive, but she asked me one question, just to make sure:

"Are you sure you're not doing something destructive?"

It can be easy to lose sight of the value of things when you're depressed. Hobbies, relationships and the future seem to wither in your mind. All of a sudden, an immensely valuable Middlebury education feels completely secondary to simply feeling OK. I believe that you should take care of your emotional well-being first, and that we can all do better in that regard. I also believe that, even though it can be hard to be mentally well at Middlebury, struggling is OK and can be compatible with a fulfilling college life. You can struggle well and successfully — and there are a few attitudes that I think go a long way.

First, you should temper your expectations of Middlebury's administration. To be clear, it's not that we don't deserve better as students — but all institutions are run by fallible people who can only do so much. During the pandemic, my high school was frayed at the edges: teachers' strikes, no school buses, lunch lines longer than the lunch period, students having seizures off drugs and a principal credulous enough that she was tricked into throwing a gang sign on camera (C for Central!). The teachers and students held the school together through constant disruption. In retrospect, I was much too stressed about the school's problems when I could have been taking better care of myself. Middlebury has its own problems, but that's normal, in my view. You can't expect the school to save you.

Second, on a related note, I feel that the mental health resources at this college are about as good as one can expect. When I tried to get help for the first time at home, my health insurance gave me a two-month lead time before my intake. Thankfully, my parents decided to pay for private therapy, which helped me better understand what I was experiencing. Here, I can get care every week for free. Regardless of its quality, this is a gift that we are fortunate to have.

My best experience with on-campus healthcare was when I got medication for the first time last year. I was nervous; I wanted something that made my depression more manageable without making me feel like a different person. The staff at the Center for Health and Wellness made me feel heard and respected, and they gave me better care than I have received from anyone in my whole life. I will be resuming Wellbutrin later this month.

With that said, simply using those resources is often not sufficient to be mentally well on this campus. The small size, isolated setting, and academic rigor can create a sort of mental and social pressure chamber. This is to be expected — and I believe that it falls on us students to make it easier to be well, both for ourselves and for others in our community.

I still struggle with my depression, and I don't have all the answers. What I can tell you is that the best thing you can do is to keep showing up. I suggest that you make a list of little things — taking a little walk, eating a piece of fruit, making a little drawing — and make a deal with yourself to do them even if you don't feel like it. It's OK to struggle, and it's OK to ask for help. Being depressed can feel embarrassing, but there is nothing embarrassing about letting people know that you're having a hard time.

If someone tells you that they're struggling, in all likelihood, they don't mean for it to be a big deal. They may not need your advice, or even your commiseration. When I'm depressed, I just don't want people to wonder about me — and I want to continue to be included, even if I seem a bit off. One more opportunity to show up goes a long way. This, I trust, we can provide for each other.

# PHOTOS OF THE WEEK:
## *Fall foliage at Middlebury*

Fall foliage on campus is beginning to thrive as the season reaches its peak. Managing Editor Cole Chaudhari '26 and Landscape Horticulturist Tim Parsons captured views of the changing leaves this week from outside Forest Hall and Milliken Hall, respectively. Vermont fall foliage moves from north to south within the state, painting our scenery with reds, oranges and yellows.

Courtesy Photo / Tim Parsons

Cole Chaudhari / The Middlebury Campus

The Middlebury Campus

**EDITOR IN CHIEF**
*Ryan McElroy**

**MANAGING EDITORS**
*Cole Chaudhari **
*Madeleine Kaptein **

**BUSINESS DIRECTOR**
*Orly Berke*

**EDITORIAL BOARD DIRECTOR**
*Hannah Sayre **

**DIGITAL DIRECTOR**

**DIGITAL DIRECTOR**
*Sheila Lam*

**NEWS DESK**
*Maggie Bryan *†*
*Rosella Graham **
*Caroline Jiao **
*Evan Weiss **

**LOCAL DESK**
*Mandy Berghela *†*
*Katrina Schwarz*
*Ben Wagner **
*Agnes Wang **

**OPINIONS DESK**
*Claire Shapiro †*
*Charlotte Roberts **
*Lucy Schembre **
*Yuvraj Shah **
*Shane Silverman **
*Haydn Suske-Funk **

**ARTS & CULTURE DESK**
*Catherine Goodrich *†*
*Virginia Frau*
*Norah Khan **
*Tulip Larson*

**SPORTS DESK**
*Jack McGuire *†*
*Ting Cui*
*Jonathan Buchholz*

**MULTIMEDIA DESK**
*June Su*
*Katherine Michaelson*

**VISUALS DESK**
*Idanesi Ojior*
*Skiles Roberts-Salvador*
*David Zhao*

**LAYOUT EDITORS**
*Eliza Bernene*
*Noor Khan*
*Sophia Kovacs*

**Member of Editorial Board*
*† Senior Editor*

The Campus reserves the right to deny publication of all or part of a submission for any reason. This includes, but is not limited to: the making of assertions based on hearsay; the relation of private conversations; the libelous mention of unverifiable events; the use of vulgar language or personal attacks; unwarranted requests for anonymity.

More information about the paper and its submission policies can be found online at www.middleburycampus.com.

The opinions expressed by contributors to the Opinions section, as well as reviews, columns, editorial comics and other commentary, are views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the newspaper. The Campus welcomes letters to the editor at 250 words or less, or opinions submissions at 800 words or less.

**@middleburycampus**

**@middcampus**

**The Middlebury Campus**

# MEET GEORGE MATTHEW JR: "THE BELL GUY"

By NORAH KHAN
*Arts & Culture Editor*

Every day at 12:30 p.m. sharp, the carillon atop the Middlebury College Chapel tolls a melody of song throughout campus. You may have heard the rings on your way to class or to the dining halls for lunch. But have you ever truly stopped to listen and think about them? Introducing 89-year-old George Matthew Jr, who has been Middlebury's Carillonneur since 1985.

A carillon is a musical instrument played with a keyboard and is composed of at least 23 bells. The bells are cast in bronze, hung in fixed suspension, and tuned in chromatic order so that they can be sounded harmoniously. To make music, the carillonneur strikes the keys, and the wires connecting them trigger the corresponding bells to ring. With over 60 years of carillon experience, Matthew is a master of the instrument and its history.

Matthew is a highly skilled musician that can play a variety of instruments from the carillon to the mellophone to the veena.

"My parents started me on violin when I was five, it didn't work. They started me on piano when I was six, that didn't work either. When I was seven, my parents bought me a mellophone, and that did it!" Matthew said. "I really wanted to play the organ, my father had this great big organ he played that thundered and rolled and so forth."

However, Matthew realized that he would have to try the piano again to learn the organ, so when he was eleven, he took up the instrument again.

"I worked very hard, and they let me take up organ when I was twelve," Matthew said.

At thirteen, he had his first job as a church organist; he can still be heard playing the organ today at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Middlebury. But the opportunity to play the carillon wouldn't arrive till much later.

Matthew's parents wanted him to study science, so he majored in chemistry at Columbia University. Post-graduation, Matthew went straight to work, conducting chemical research for fifteen years. For 10 of those years, he was the resident chemist at the Mallory Battery Company (now known as Duracell). Throughout this time, he was still playing the organ.

Then everything changed. Matthew met a man named Dionisio Lind, the first Black professional carillonneur. Affectionately called "Dio" by Matthew and others in the carillon community, Lind gave Matthew lessons and introduced him to the basics.

In 1968, while living in Stamford, CT., Matthew played in the first public performance of the Stamford carillon. A year later, he was appointed Carillonneur and ended up playing there for 30 years. On a Saturday morning in February 1984, Matthew received a call from Emory Fanning, the then-head of the Middlebury Music department, inquiring about a carillon demonstration.

Matthew headed down to the church to meet Fanning and Allan Dragone, the chairman of the college's Board of Trustees. They told him that Dragone was gifting the college a carillon. As he demonstrated the instrument to them, Fanning and Dragone inquired about the bells and the mechanics of the instrument and eventually appointed him carillonneur of the Midldebury carillon.

The first carillons were invented in 1510 in Germany and the Netherlands as a solution for the inefficiency of the church bells at the time. Since then, the instrument has spread across the Atlantic, first through churches and so forth.

"In this country there are 178 carillons. 71 of those are in colleges or universities. It's truly become a college instrument in this country. And there are only 6 college carillons outside of the U.S. that I know of," Matthew said.

"This is why I play everything here. I play some sacred music but I play mostly secular music because I feel that is what it's for. I've played music from just about every country. I would like as many people to know about the carillon as possible. It's one of the great things about this college," he said.

Matthew aims to reflect the diverse student body in his song selections, which he changes everyday. He mentioned playing Ukrainian songs, Mexican songs, and songs from Afghanistan.

To reach the carillon, Matthew traverses unfinished floors with exposed insulation and beams — fitting for a chapel attic — and ascends several steep staircases. The cozy room, hidden from the world by a charming wooden door, feels like discovering a secret respite after a long journey (yes, there are that many stairs). The walls are plastered with posters and pictures from Matthew's music experiences, and a single window overlooks the back roof of the Chapel, with Proctor peeking out in the background. Newspaper clippings featuring past students and mentors are wedged between images of foreign carillons, each with a unique design.

One corner of the room houses a dark, wide ladder with four wooden planks. Climb up the planks, stick your head through the wooden hatch atop it, and you will find arguably one of the most glorious visions on this campus. Forty-eight bronze bells, all grouped together by size, hang throughout the tall structure. It is surreal to watch the bells as they peal. The sounds of the formidable bronze bells ringing rush through one's ears and words dissolve away in awe. So robust and loud, yet bright and graceful.

NORAH KHAN/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
*George Matthew Jr. has been the Middlebury College Carillonneur for nearly 40 years.*

Students can also learn how to play the carillon; Matthew teaches free lessons to anyone interested in the instrument."I currently have two students, who are seniors, so I'm going to be losing them soon!" he said.

If you have a specific melody or song that you wish to hear on the carillon, don't be afraid to email Matthew at gmatthew@middlebury.edu.

"Occasionally I will get requests from students to play this, or play that. And if I can, I do, I mean I can't do everything up there, but I like getting suggestions," Matthew said.

# HENDRIK DEY '99 ON "COLONNADED STREETS AND URBAN THEATER IN THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE"

By YUHAN ZHANG
*Contributing Writer*

Architecture, political standards, everyday ways of life — how did these concepts interact with each other in the Later Roman Empire? On Sept. 26, Dr. Hendrik W. Dey '99, Middlebury alumnus and Professor of Art History at Hunter College of City University of New York (CUNY), shed some light on this question with a lecture elaborating on colonnaded streets' role in Later Roman societies.

The talk entitled "Colonnaded Streets and Urban Theater in the Later Roman Empire," sponsored by the Department of History of Art and Architecture, took place in Johnson Memorial Building and made for an interesting look into Roman architectural history.

At Middlebury, Dr. Dey majored in classical studies and art history. He now specializes in architecture and urbanism in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin between late antiquity and the Middle Ages. His most recent book, "The Making Of Medieval Rome: A New Profile of the City, 400 – 1420," won the Bridge Book Award in 2022 for the American Non-Fiction category.

Dey's lecture provided a glimpse into the content of this book. In the late Roman Empire, grand colonnaded streets were a revolutionary characteristic in leading cities. Why were they important? How did they function? Dey's presentation gave an overview of the questions: colonnaded streets reshaped the cityscapes to fulfill the political needs of the late Roman political offices. These streets gradually became the core figure of Roman cities and eventually influenced Roman citizens' perception of urban life.

The lecture began with a brief history of the late Roman Empire. From 235 B.C. to 285 B.C., the Roman Empire experienced a period of civil war, foreign invasion, political instability, and economic disintegration known as the Crisis of the Third Century.

Amidst this political chaos, the Late Roman emperors sought ways to revive the "dignity of the imperial office," said Dey. As a result, a 600-yard-long, two-story-tall colonnaded street that extended from the city gate to the imperial palace was built in Milan — the city that replaced Rome as the center of the empire — to function as a stage for emperors to display their power.

"Every time a late Roman emperor leaves their house to go out into the city or comes to the city from somewhere else, it is a processional cycle. It is a ritual, ceremonial occasion where everybody has a part to play. Every citizen's supposed to carry out their own cheer," explained Dey. Each citizen had their own place to cheer in the ceremonies (celebrating the emperor's victory, travel, or return), and chanting lines for the emperor were carved on the stones. The same kind of colonnaded street was also built in Rome and every major city at the time.

Unsatisfied with merely changing the cities, the emperors rebuilt them entirely with colonnaded streets to connect the city's architecture to a larger imperial will. Dr. Dey explained how the colonnaded streets conveyed political values: the statues of political icons were placed on colonnaded streets that were slightly tilted, which made the citizens feel presided over by imperial iconography on a seemingly endless road.

The final portion of Dey's talk discussed that as the colonnaded streets became an essential figure of cities, people's perceptions of cityscapes changed. Colonnaded streets became central to everyday citizen's understanding of urban life in the Later Roman Empire.

# Annual storytelling event, Cocoon, invites awe and wonder

By JONATHAN EATON
*Staff Writer*

On the brisk evening of Sept. 27, Mahaney Arts Center (MAC) was full of students, parents, professors and community members. The crowd was humming as mellow ethereal music played in the background, patiently awaiting a night of wonder.

Since 2012, the Middlebury Moth-Up and the MAC have hosted an annual live storytelling event titled Cocoon, where they invite five members of the Middlebury community to share stories from their lives relating to the evening's theme. The event was inspired by National Public Radio's renowned show The Moth Radio Hour. This evening's theme was Awe, dovetailing with the Middlebury College Museum of Art's current exhibit "An Invitation to Awe." The exhibit was inspired by Edmund Burke's work "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful," and explores both historical artwork and student artwork relating to the theme of sublime beauty. Professor of Art History Katy Smith Abbott, one of this year's Cocoon storytellers, curated the this exhibit with three years of students in her classes.

Sammy Jo Serell '27.5 opened up the evening with an incredible coming-of-age tale, sharing her full circle journey from being accepted into Middlebury to escaping a challenging relationship, to arriving at college and experiencing the eclipse.

"I realized the person I was and the person that hurt me didn't exist to me anymore. I was experiencing wonder in so many magnificent ways in the way that I loved my friends, in the way that I loved myself, and in the way the moon kissed the sun for just four minutes before continuing its journey across the sky… I mourned the young girl that I had lost, but I celebrated the young woman I had become," Serell said, reminding us about the temporality of our existence and the transformative nature of finding community.

Next, Alex Messinger, a resident of Burlington, Vt. for 34 years and a climate change lobbyist, explored the awe and beauty of disrupted plans. He spoke about his time biking from Glacier National Park down the continental divide to Breckenridge, CO. Messinger had intended to use his time off from friends and family in Vermont and his job at the University of Vermont (UVM) to go on an introspective journey, spending time alone along the Great Divide Bike path while raising money for 350Vermont, a climate justice nonprofit based in Burlington. However, a few days into his ride he was forced to seek out others in order to find a bike repair kit. Instead of riding alone, he found a couple to accompany him on the rest of the journey. Messinger spoke about the power of asking for help and that the "joy, wonder and awe experienced on the trip is better when shared with others."

Ben Wagner '25 inspired us to seek out joy, with a story on his time spent working as a camp counselor in Colorado over the summer, teaching children to feel confident and comfortable in the wilderness. While there, he and his colleague Jack Martell '25 were inspired to climb Pikes Peak. Soon after setting up camp on a neighboring ridge, they were surrounded by ominous clouds. Wagner's phenomenal stage presence kept the audience alive, exploring the beauty of the unexpected — not summiting the peak meant spending time with friend and more thoroughly enjoying the stunning views that the valley had to offer.

Then alumna Shamail Naseer '24 shared a heartwarming story about working with children while studying abroad in Japan, illustrating how important it is to take a leap of faith and start a conversation with a stranger. One day, Naseer dreaded going to school because they were working with socially awkward middle schoolers and she was placed in a very quiet group. However, by stepping out of her comfort zone and using her Japanese to challenge the middle schoolers to engage with others, Naseer was able to form a deep bond and even win a game of Molluk — a Finnish throwing game — with her newfound friends. Her story reminded us of the joy of human connection.

"My favorite aspect of the event was being in community with people. I feel like everyone really showed up for the speakers. It was great to see how interconnected things are" said audience member Liza Grebenkina '25.

Smith Abbott closed the night out with a beautiful yet melancholy tale about dancing with her best friend for the last time. Since their first college dance audition, Abbott and Jennifer had planned to dance their whole life together. However, in her 40s, Jennifer was diagnosed with blastoma, a type of brain cancer. In those last moments, with the music playing and their arms swinging together, Jennifer was her radiant self once again, despite her illness.

"I really enjoyed hearing the variety of stories tonight. Each was special in its own way. I really enjoyed Shamail's frivolity with the students and Katy Smith Abbott was really touching at the end," said Annette Franklin, director of The House Non-Profit, which serves international students.

Indeed, I was moved to tears by the beauty and sorrow of Abbott's words. That moment reminded me of the ephemeral nature of existence and the importance of storytelling to engage in our common humanity.

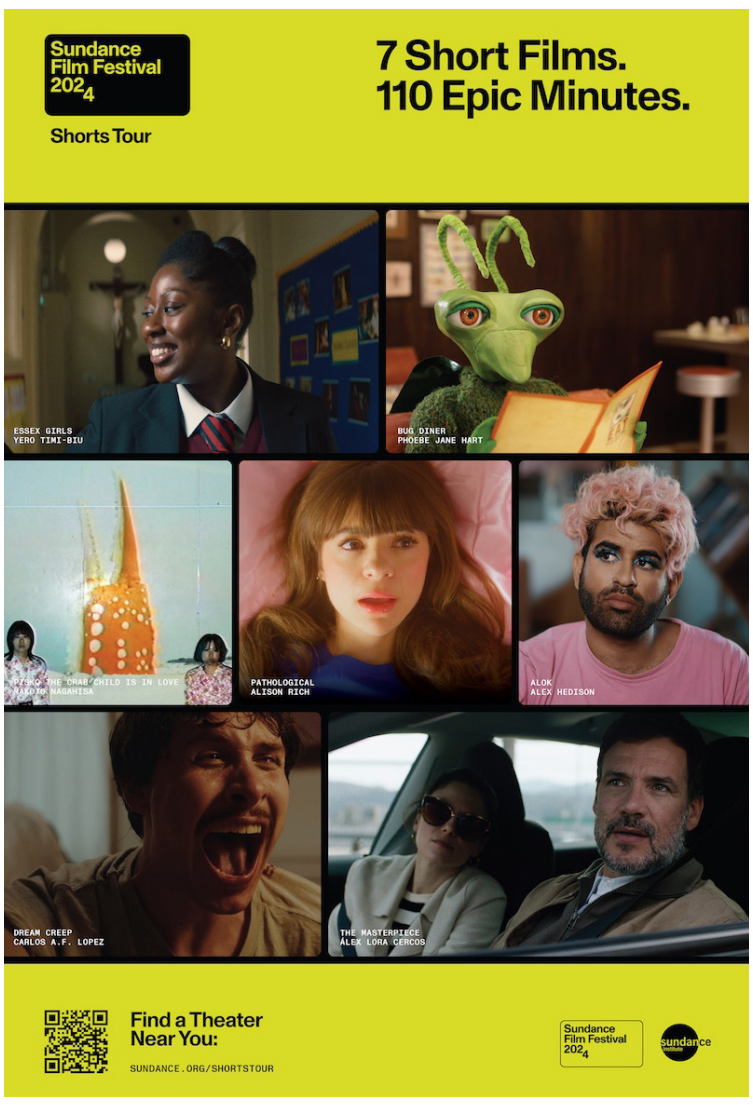
COURTESY PHOTO / TODD BALFOUR
*Professor Katy Smith Abbott shares a powerful experience relating to the theme of "awe."*

# Middlebury's Hirschfield International Film Series fall season opens with the Sundance Short Film Tour

By ANTHONY CINQUINA
*Contributing Writer*

Middlebury's Hirschfield International Film series opened Thursday, Sept. 26 to a packed theater, as Sundance Film Festival's 2024 Short Film Tour — currently traveling its way across the country — made a gracious stop at Dana Auditorium. Of the seven shorts shown, four were undeniably worth further reflection.

Where to start with "Bug Diner"? The incredibly choreographed and animated stop-motion film begins mildly enough. The diner in question is cute and enigmatic, the bugs are whispery and unreadable. But as we follow the restaurant's fly waiter down into the mole chef's kitchen den, that original charm distorts into obscenity as you realize that you are in for five minutes of bug pornography. The editing and music is dynamic, thrusting the film forward with a vague sexual energy of its own. It is difficult and it is a joy to watch the world of bugs devolve into a sexually experimental and emotionally complex rapture. Upon a necessary — and maybe unwilling — reflection, one realizes, however, that it wasn't all lude. "Bug Diner" does have something to say. It rips from the collective id of humanity all the most decadent, devious and typical sexual and emotional intrigues, placing them in the bizarre world of moles, flies, grasshoppers and a weird lactating squirrel-thing. 'What does it all mean?' is a harder question to answer. Instead, just let it all happen to you; laugh or avert your eyes, you'll probably end up doing both.




COURTESY PHOTO / SUNDANCE INSTITUTE
*Poster for the 2024 Sundance Short Films Tour.*

"The Masterpiece" is a skillfully composed thriller with a fleeting likeness to Bong Joon Ho's "Parasite" or Kurosawa's "High and Low." Leo and Diana, a wealthy white couple, invite scrap collectors Salif and Youssef to their house, offering them progressively more broken junk until their van can fit nothing else. Diana notices Salif has a potentially precious painting, and a tense negotiation follows, ending with Salif giving up the chance for millions in favor of the guarantee of a far smaller sum. The racial and class conflicts embroider the film, and necessarily so, as if there was no way to artfully dance around the issue. The muted plucked bass beats with your heart for the whole 20 minutes as your brain tries to decipher the illegible gazes shared between characters: Who will break bad first?

Salif's ultimate choice was not predictable, though it was an inevitability. You cannot help but hold out some useless hope for the scrap collectors, but once Salif accepts what is essentially Leo's loose pocket change, you feel that he has made the right choice, the only choice. One feels as if the $1,000 Salif earns will mean more to him than the millions that the white couple may or may not acquire. And regardless of whether the painting will sell, the money remains where it is, where society deems it belongs, in privileged hands.

"ALOK" is an autobiographical short about poet, political activist, and comedian Alok Vaid-Menon. Alok opens by emphasizing the importance of the pronoun "we," speaking to and for humanity on behalf of the marginalized, with the message of love. Alok and their friends' energetic timbre, eclectic style and fantastically bohemian meditations on life are magnetic. Alok's poetry is the thematic high point of the film. The poems are read with intent and are full of pain, each word hitting with the weight of experience. It feels necessary to platform Alok's voice in response to the history of discrimination and violence suffered by the transgender community, and quite a voice they have — poetic, honest, passionate and kind.

The film's opening is strong, but "ALOK" plateaus as its conceptual ambitions are razed by its runtime. The editing keeps viewers at an arm's length, which creates an experience more akin to watching a commercial than a Sundance short. In the moments the narrative zooms out, images of the Holocaust, the 21st century refugee crisis and civil rights protests flicker so quickly across the screen you feel as if you have been slapped in the face by issues which demand far more attention.

"Pisko The Crab Child is in Love" is a more than worthy finale for the 110 minute tour. The film is wonderfully sincere and injected with a kind of careless energy that is rapidly infectious. Pisko's father is a crab and her mother is a human, thus making her, naturally, half crab. Though this fact only physically manifests in her need to hold up two pincer-like peace signs in every picture she is in, the abnormality of her heredity sends her down a painful search for love. A search that ends when Pisko and her close friend Kubokayo confess feelings for each other. The short is filmed in the style of old homemade camcorder footage, the narrative quirky, unpredictable and reckless. There's a certain honesty about the film which betrays the merits of auteurship. It is perhaps the only film on the tour which feels like a truly singular, personal artistic vision. The editing is fast-paced, the shot composition is both incredibly particular and hastily maximal and the music pivots from angry to sad to frantic. The film ends with Pisko professing what an embarrassment it is to talk about love, but this may be one of the least embarrassing attempts I've seen put to the screen.

The Sundance Short Film Tour was the perfect way to kick off this year's Hirschfield International Film Series. Among the selections, three films earned awards at this year's Sundance Film Festival: "The Masterpiece" won the Grand Jury Prize; "Bug Diner" won the award for animation; and "Pisko the Crab Child Is In Love" won the award for directing. But each film in the tour demanded attention and proved its place among the others.

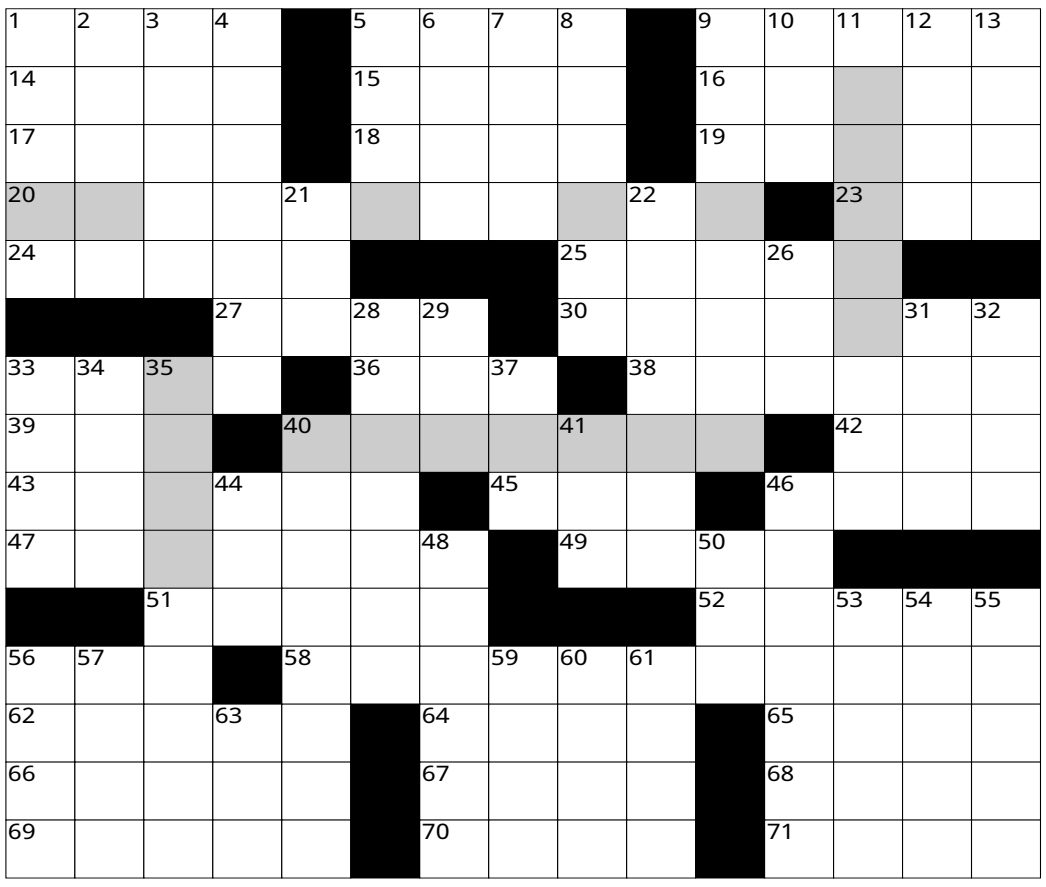
And ultimately the victory is yours; we are lucky to have a local institution showcasing the international cinema which would otherwise be lost to us in the modern deluge of media, music and meaning.

## 52 pick up

Ella Charnizon

**ACROSS**
1 A lad
5 Part of CD
9 "Come in!"
14 Strong and healthy
15 Stench
16 Conductor Zubin
17 "___ Brockovich"
18 Part to play
19 Second string
20 A part in a connected, undirected graph that must be included in any simple path between two specific nodes
23 Nile snake
24 ___ boom
25 Law partner?
27 Hit the road
30 Under, in a way
33 Secretly includes on an email
36 Narrow inlet
38 In a spooky way
39 Frying liquid
40 One is a girls best friend
42 Opposite of NNW
43 Pan-fries
45 Mine find
46 Trick ending?
47 Halloween decorations
49 Pull an all-nighter
51 Yearned (for)
52 TV, radio, newspapers, etc.
56 3-down's vehicle
58 Poker pack, or where the shaded squares can be found
62 Mecca resident
64 Tolstoy's Karenina
65 Play a round
66 British bottoms
67 Suggestions, for short
68 R.E.M.'s "The ___ Love"
69 Sassy
70 Off! ingredient
71 "___ we forget ..."

**DOWN**
1 Mating game
2 Silent Marx brother
3 Extraterrestrial
4 Puts (in) tentatively
5 Nickelodeon explorer
6 "American ___" singing compition
7 One and only
8 Words to live by
9 Like some wartime journalists
10 Take home
11 Only French-produced film to win an Oscar for Best Picture (2011)
12 GPS guesses
13 Wheelchair access
21 "Rocks"
22 Grass on the other side
26 Corn unit
28 5-across, for one
29 Aunt, in Madrid
31 "Anything ___?"
32 Textile worker
33 Pear variety
34 Florentine farewell
35 Where Micky Mouse hangs out
37 Latin 101 word
40 Pizza, in chicago
41 Middle-earth monster
44 What it takes to tango
46 Tolkien ring bearer
48 Digital camera insert, briefly
50 Film buff's channel
53 Go on and on
54 Runs in neutral
55 ___ as a fiddle
56 Mil. fliers
57 Jamie of "M*A*S*H"
59 Patella's place
60 Fairy tale start
61 Observe Ramadan
63 ___ Moines, Iowa



# FOOTBALL BEATS COLBY 24-16 ON FALL FAMILY WEEKEND

By JACK McGUIRE
*Senior Sports Editor*

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

*Brian Moran '24 throws a pass during Middlebury's parents weekend win over Colby.*

The football team (2–1) squeaked past Colby College (3–0) 24–16 this past weekend. The parents' weekend win came after a strong second half from the Panthers.

The game started off slow with the first five drives of the game all resulting in punts. The Panthers, though, started the scoring with around three minutes left in the first quarter. After starting the drive with a great field position on Colby's 44 yard line, the Panthers took a 3–0 lead after Zach Levy '25 kicked a 44 yard field goal. However, Middlebury's lead was short lived as the Mules quickly responded with a field goal of their own to tie the game 3–3 before the end of the quarter.

Middlebury quickly retook the lead in the second quarter. In the Panthers' first drive of the quarter, quarterback Aidan Moss '27 connected with Patrick Jamin '25 on a 27-yard touchdown pass. Unfortunately for the Panthers, the Mules stormed back again. They scored another touchdown before the end of the second quarter to tie the game 10–10. With two minutes left in the half, both teams had promising drives and threatened to score. But, both drives ended in interceptions, keeping the score tied going into the half.

In the third quarter, Middlebury finally took the lead for good. Ten minutes into the third quarter, Brian Moran '26, in at quarterback, threw his first touchdown pass of the day. He threw a 40 yard pass to Ethan Vashel '25 to give the Panthers the lead. The Panthers continued to put the pressure on Colby. In the fourth quarter, Moran completed a pass to Jamin that resulted in a 65 yard touchdown, giving the Panthers a 24–10 lead.

Colby did score one more touchdown before the end of the game, but it was far too little too late. The Middlebury defense played strong and secured the Panthers' win. Charlie Grant '27 led the team with nine solo tackles, and Michael Votta '27 had an interception. On offense, Moran had a total of two touchdown passes and 248 passing yards by the end of the game, and Jamin led the team with 113 receiving yards and two receiving touchdowns.

The Panthers victory came as a continuation of the team's positive mentality after they lost the first game of the season to Wesleyan 43–7. The team has now won two consecutive games since their opening day loss.

"Our motto is '1-0,'" which means staying focused on the moment and winning at everything we do. We didn't start off the season the way we were hoping to but our goal now is to put that behind us and focus on each Saturday as they come," Moran wrote to The Campus. "That means whether it's in the classroom, film room, weight room, or on the field, we need to win at everything we are doing to put us in the best position for game day."

The team travels to Massachusetts this weekend to play Amherst (2–1). The Panthers return home the week of Oct. 12 to play Williams (2–1).

Welcome back to PFL Weekly! The stoke continues as we recap our UNDEFEATED sports week here at Middlebury. We talk about parents' weekend and discuss what's to come. Two great men's cross country runners, Benjamin Hughes '27 and Ray Pavlik '27 joined us in the studio for a special interview. We learned about meet rituals, running as a team sport and overall cross country culture in the northeast. We ended the interview with a great Mount Rushmore of college mascots and an exhilarating trivia question. Thanks for listening!

PFL WEEKLY

The Middlebury Campus

**Join The Campus today!**

Write for News, Local, Opinion, Arts & Culture, Sports and Multimedia!

***We are hiring Online Editors, Layout Editors, and Photographers/Visual Artists.***

*First years are welcome to apply! Email campus@middlebury.edu for more.*

# Women's rugby cruises in home opener against Bryant University

By JOSH HARKINS
*Contributing Writer*

Under the warm September sun, Middlebury Women's Rugby rolled over the Bryant University Bulldogs 30–0 this past Saturday in a slightly shortened game.

The team scored four tries. Ainsley Fremont '27, Alex Kaleugher '25, Jojo Hayes '25 and Penny Ly '25 each scored one while Charley Snell '27 scored two.

Of particular note in Saturday's game were the scorers, Fremont and Snell. Snell broke tackles left and right and made her way over the touchline on the right wing, a side of the field she dominated throughout the game. The two backs, who accounted for half of Middlebury's scoring, vigorously broke through Bryant defenders' tackle attempts, frequently one after another. Middlebury was at times unstoppable.

Regrettably, the second half of the game was shortened due to injuries on the Bryant side. But in the first half, the 15-a-side Panthers scored tries one after another while stifling every Bryant attack. Bryant tried valiantly to halt the progress of Middlebury's play, but time after time the Panthers simply kept pushing forward.

During Ly's try, the team worked the ball over to Fremont in a "ball out play" and Fremont began working her way through the defense.

"[Fremont] pushe[d]through everyone else, like the defense, she swat[ted] them down like flies," Ly said. "It's hard to go through four different people, you know?"

By this point they were near the touchline so even as Fremont was being taken to the ground and pitching the ball to Ly, there wasn't far to go. Ly herself was tackled inches from the touchline and made one final reach until the whistle blew, signaling the try was good.

One of Middlebury's keys to victory was good passing.nThe team was consistently lined up in excellent rugby formation and their passes created wide openings in the Bryant defensive line that the Panthers never failed to exploit.

"We have our super awesome wings Charley and Ainsley who were just shooting up the sides, getting it in, and scoring," Maeve Shea '24.5 said.

There was one theme that many players emphasized: the importance of teamwork and the support that Middlebury Women's Rugby provides its members.

"It's just such a supportive team, from the moment I joined I felt really welcome," Fremont said. "We all support each other."

After losing their first game of the season to Bentley 26–5 the week prior, the Panthers emphatically proved they will not go quietly into the night.

Last year, Middlebury bested the Bulldogs 38–19 in an away match at the end of the season. This season, they started out strong, showing that last fall's 3–1 record was no fluke. The rest of the season holds promise, with an away matchup against Castleton this Saturday followed by a bye week and then two home games to finish out the year.

COURTESY PHOTO / ANYA ROSE

*The women's rugby team plays against Bryant University at home.*

# SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH KEEGAN LEACH '25, SKI PATROL PRESIDENT

By JACK McGUIRE
*Senior Sports Editor*

Keegan Leach '25, originally from Lee, Massachusetts, is serving as one of the co-presidents of Middlebury Ski Patrol this year. Leach has served on Middlebury Ski Patrol since his freshman year.

In this edition of Seven Questions, Leach discusses how Ski Patrol works as a team, his lifelong passion for skiing and his favorite dining hall meal.

**Jack McGuire:** Many people wouldn't consider Ski Patrol a traditional sport, but why would you consider you guys to be athletes and part of a team?

**Keegan Leach:** Well, I don't know if we're not necessarily athletes, but we're certainly part of a team. Teamwork is a major part of the job, and it almost fills the void of a sports team for many of its members, including myself. So when we arrive at a job site or an accident, we have to have effective and clear communication on how to transport this patient back down the mountain and best treat them. It's crucial for both efficiency and patient care, and so we need to work as a team in very high stakes situations, and in that way, we're just as much of a team as any other sports team. However, obviously, we do not have a competitive aspect, so we're obviously not a traditional sport, but we definitely are a team, and we work very effectively as a team.

**JM:** Can you tell me what's your experience with skiing throughout your life?

**KL:** So I grew up ski racing in Western Massachusetts. I did both high school and club racing. I did club at a little mountain called Jiminy Peak, and then I ski raced at Bosque too, the little mountains in the Berkshires. And then I've always loved skiing. I love skiing, trees, shoots, all that fun stuff. I think in a lot of ways, skiing is what brought me to Vermont, and then I joined the ski patrol when I was a freshman, and it's been great. It's a great group of skiers. But I do definitely want to emphasize, too, that you don't have to be a racer to join patrol.

**JM:** What are some of your favorite memories of Ski Patrol?

**KL:** I worked February break last year, and it was just such a phenomenal time. The break crew was awesome. We got to stay at the Bread Loaf campus, and we worked all break. The snow was pretty good, but it was just like such a fun crew. We got a fair amount of accidents, but it was just great vibes all around. Staying at "The Earthworm" was such a fun experience, which is the place we stay at Bread Loaf.

**JM:** What are some of the biggest challenges of being on Ski Patrol?

**KL:** I don't know if there are many challenges. I think just re-entering the season, keeping up with your patient assessments and splinting skills and everything, all that nature. And then the 7 a.m. wake ups can be tough on a cold January day, but it's always worth it.

**JM:** Do you have any tips for staying safe out there on the slopes?

**KL:** Ski within your limits. Ski in control. A lot of times, people go skiing with their friends, and their friends are at higher levels than them. You don't need to try and keep up. Ski at your own pace, and ski what you're comfortable with.

**JM:** What's your favorite run at the Snow Bowl?

**KL:** It's gotta be Ross. I mean there are two types of people. There are Ross people and there are Allen people. I'm a Ross person. I think the pitch is so fun at the bottom when it's well groomed. It doesn't get tracked out as much as Allen. I don't think [Ross] gets quite as icy. That said, Allen on a good day is fantastic. I am just a Ross guy.

**JM:** What's your favorite dining hall meal?

**KL:** General Tso's Chicken. It's fried chicken with sweet sauce on it. What can you complain about?

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY SKI PATROL

*Keegan Leach '25 (front) leads a tobogan during a ski patrol rescue.*

# THE CLOSET REPORT: ABEERA RIAZ '27

By AREN LAU

In a place like Middlebury, it can be hard to sift through the flannels, jeans and hiking boots that serve as the state's style monopoly — not that there's anything wrong with embracing the maple. Still, every once in a while, a splash of something different draws attention amongst the waves of plaid. For me, one of those splashes has been the fashion of Abeera Riaz '27.

The sophomore's colorful yet muted aesthetic caught my eye when I met her a year ago; Her consistency of bright-on-dark outfits (I have called her the inventor of Pop Rocks-core), complemented by her love for accessories, prompted me to base this debut installment of The Closet Report on her.

Riaz began the fit check right at the top.

"I have three piercings on one ear and five on the other," she said. She found her silver moon and star earrings at one of Middlebury's own thrift stores, Round Robin.

"I chose them partly because they remind me of the Pakistani flag, so it's like a piece of heritage that I can carry around with me. Plus, they're cute," Riaz said. While a Brooklynite from very early childhood, Pakistan is her home country.

From her neck dangle not one, not two, but three necklaces, their charms resting neatly equidistant from one another. She revealed that the shortest — a round-edged star ostensibly made from rose quartz — is not the real thing. Riaz's next two necklaces are both silver, the middle-hanging one the most recent find: a flat pendant from a metalworks market stand in Wisconsin during the Strawberry Festival last summer. It is carved with a design of a woman and some music notes. The third is a chunky mermaid "probably from Justice."

Despite this abundance of silver, Riaz actually feels that gold suits her more due to her facial features and her gold-colored nostril ring. However, she prefers wearing silver because of its variety, compared with the often simplistic selection of gold jewelry.

"Bracelets are definitely a staple for me," Riaz said. Not just bracelets, either, but a lot of bracelets, normally three on each wrist. "They're also good to fidget with," she added.

The bands just above her hands are mostly beaded, multicolored and add a lot to her color-maximalist style. The seaweed-colored pebble bracelet was a gift from her sister. She's had the white one since it was brown, she made the multicolored one out of her own beads, and she crafted the dark teal circlet from beads that came with some of her mother's Desi clothes.

Riaz makes a lot of accessories herself. When asked if she had bracelet-making supplies, she pulled two kits from her desk drawer. Both are filled with various beads — "Hella beads," she remarked — all organized, as well as string, and pliers for when she works with metal.

Over the summer, as she and I both call Brooklyn home, I attended a jewelry-making workshop Riaz was helping to run. It was hosted by Jam + Rico, a Caribbean jewelry company she interned with. While she doesn't see her career taking her in this especially artistic direction, one of her two majors is Art History, and she sees accessory-making as a fun hobby.

Now, the clothes themselves: From a structural standpoint, her top is just a normal t-shirt. With black as a base color, it is dashed with pinks and purples that are supported by blue accents. The design spotlights a ghostly pink butterfly, a bushel of flowers, and the non-word "Jahreschwesche," just one "L" off from "Jahreswechsel," the German equivalent of "Happy New Year." The letters bling with plastic rhinestones. It was a Depop find. "What drew me to it were the colors," she said.

"I wear a lot of jewel tones," Riaz shared. Jewel tones are just as they sound: colors inspired by jewels and gemstones. "Even my room has a lot of jewel tones in it, like this, she said, gesturing to a print-out of a 1913 painting, "The Virgin" (also called "The Maiden") by Gustav Klimt; it's a feminine, Art Nouveau piece full of rich, swirling amethyst violets, chalky sunstone yellows, and emerald greens. "I think they suit me the most," she said. "I love wearing them." It's evident. Riaz often pairs those rich, popping jewel tones that appear literally in her accessories as well as in the hues of her clothing accents with darker shades, like the black base of her shirt, her gray camo cargo pants and black Dr. Martens.

In this outfit, her thrifted cargos are baggy and hang low over her Docs, the pants slightly more masculine in design compared to her top. She likes the laid-back silhouette that cargos give her. They evoke the hip-hop-stewed youth culture of New York City, specifically Brooklyn.

"Maybe it's a little cliché, but really, my city inspires my style," she said. "Dressing like this back home, I look totally normal. Here, I think I stand out a little more. It's hard not to start changing your clothes to melt in with the crowd, though. I have to work to maintain my style."

There is always a sense of balance in Abeera Riaz's outfits, a cohesion that comes from her love of thrifting, the jewel tones and her passion for accessories. According to her, her staple bracelets and necklaces don't necessarily dictate her clothing choices, and it's a coincidence that she loves both things. That they happen to go together so well can be attributed to the potency of her personal interests, which mesh to form these colorful, eye-catching yet unpretentious ensembles each day.

Photos by Aren Lau / The Middlebury Campus